

Swanson Reservoir

2014 Survey Summary



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Fish populations are sampled each fall at Swanson Reservoir using gill nets, a method commonly used to sample fish found in open water, such as walleye, white bass, channel catfish and hybrid striped bass. Gill nets are set on approximately the same dates and locations each year to reduce variability. However, environmental factors can play a strong role in catch rate and composition data. Due to this variability biologists look at trends over time when making most management decisions rather than kneejerk decisions based on one data point.

Water levels at Swanson Reservoir have suffered the last couple years. It is important to remind boater to use caution when loading and unloading boats because the concrete ramp can be hazardous at extremely low water levels. It was also necessary to designate the west end of the lake a no wake zone due to underwater hazards and shallow water in 2014.

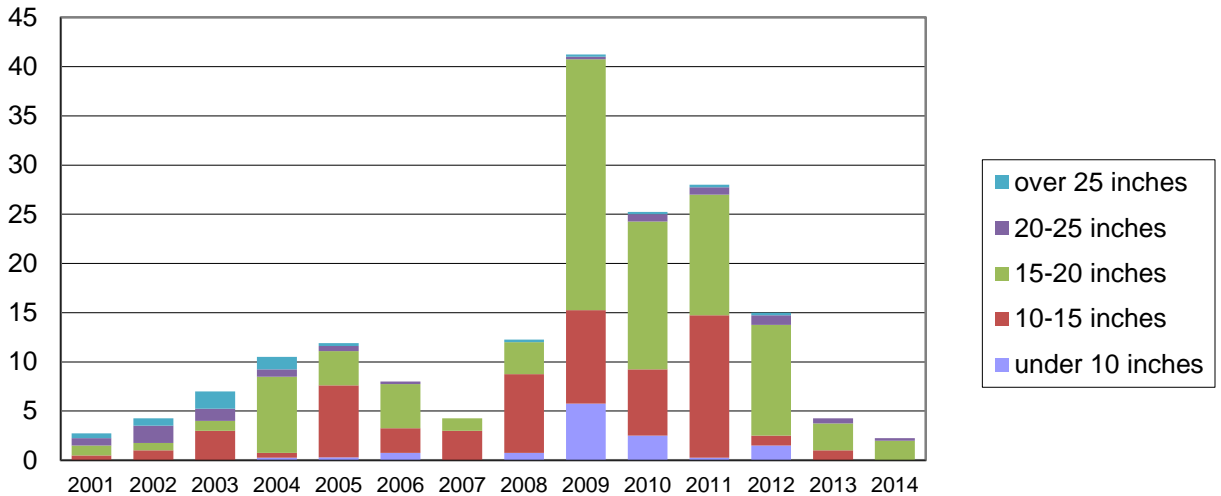
Beginning in 2009 the walleye population at Swanson improved substantially most likely due to an increase in water levels and the resulting flooded vegetation which boosted the productivity, recruitment, and the availability of habitat in the system. This is also commonly called a "new lake effect". Unfortunately the water levels are down fish populations have declined steadily with the water levels. Increased harvest may have a part in the reduction but it is most likely due to loss of fish production. The fall survey only yielded 3 walleye per net in 2014. In response, biologists have requested fingerling walleye stockings in 2014 rather than fry stockings.

White bass populations have responded similarly to the walleye numbers explained above. Survey data has been somewhat variable in recent years, but is down markedly compared the late 2000's. The fish that were sampled are large individuals but it would be nice to see a year class of young fish to fill the void. Wipers were stocked in 2013 and will be stocked on a three year schedule. Biologists saw a few larger wipers in 2014.

Biologists surveyed 9 channel catfish per net in 2014. The size structure of the fish sampled is very nice with good numbers of both pan sized and trophy channel catfish. In addition to channel catfish, blue catfish have been introduced to Swanson Reservoir and have passed the 20 inch mark in some cases. The daily bag limit for blue catfish is 1 fish per day rather than the 5 fish daily bag that on channel catfish. Blue catfish can be identified by a pronounced hump on their backs and a straight anal fin and lack spots. Channel catfish have a rounded anal fin and may or may not have spots, and lack a pronounced hump.

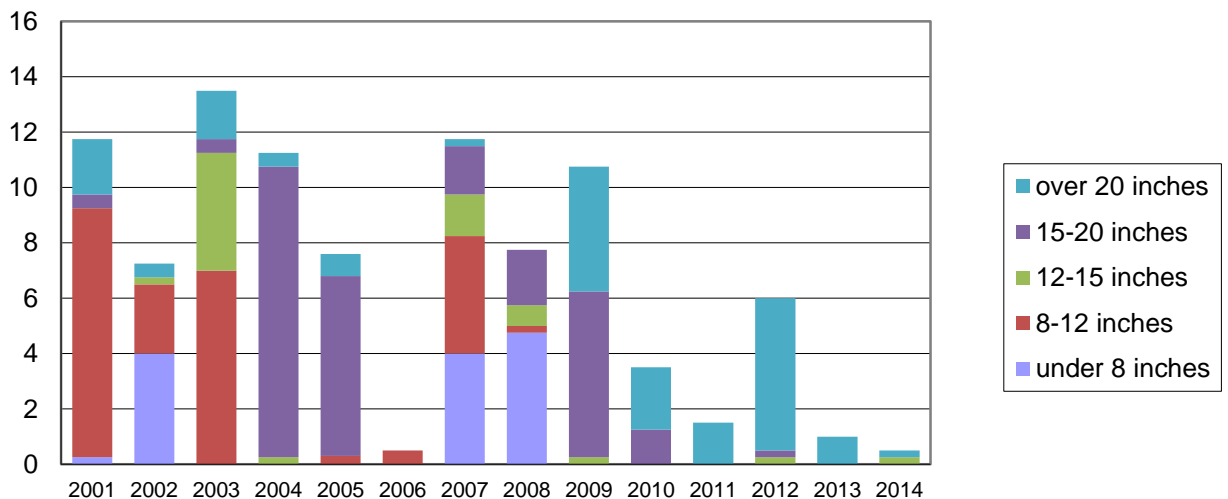
The following graphs show the average number of fish caught per net and the relative abundance of fish within several length categories. The text provides a brief explanation of the information shown in the graphs. Also included are 2013 summary graphs of some local waterbodies for comparison.

Walleye Catch Per Unit Effort



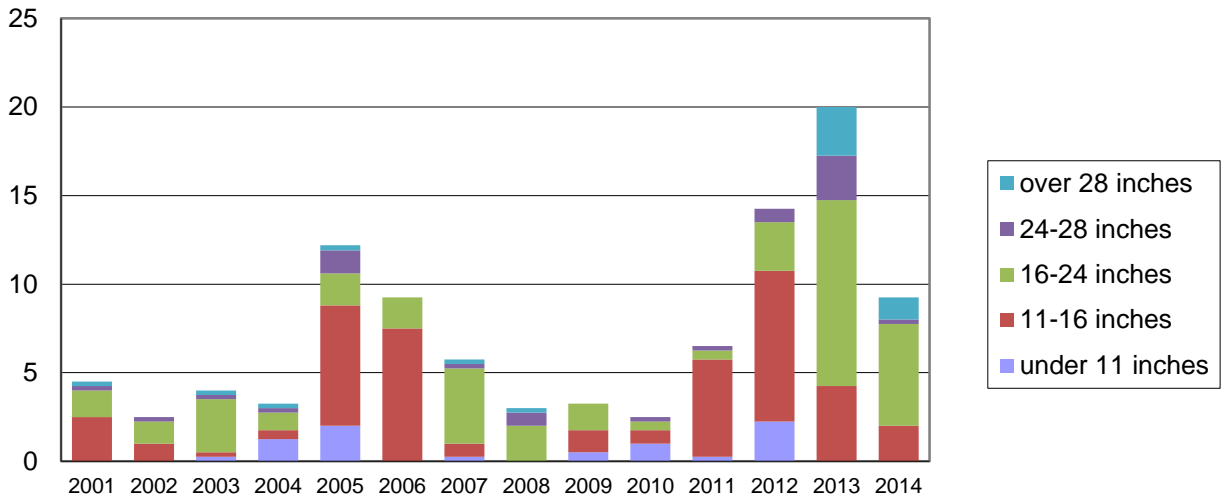
Walleye numbers were down again in 2014. Biologists sampled 3 fish per net during the fall survey. Walleye numbers peaked in 2009 and have been steadily falling ever since. The decline is due primarily to decreased recruitment and loss of nursery habitat, although increased angling pressure is also a factor. Fingerling walleye have been requested in 2015 in response to the current low water levels.

Wiper Catch Per Unit Effort



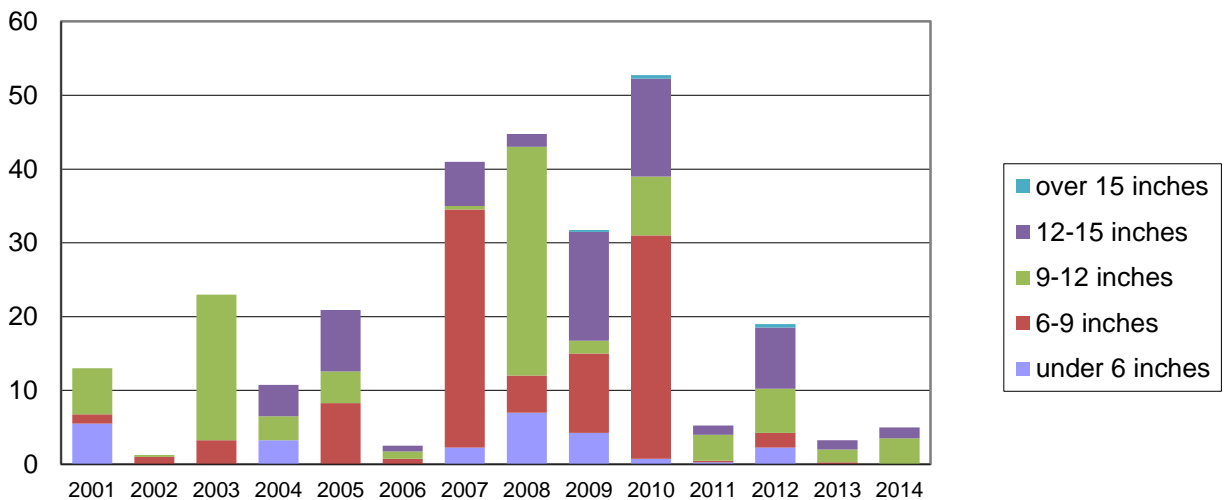
Wiper numbers have been variable at Swanson for several years due to changes in stocking plans. Wiper stockings have been reduced at Swanson due to increased walleye and white bass catches and minimal angler effort as indicated by past creel data. Wipers were stocked in 2013 and will be stocked every 3-5 years into the future to provide opportunity for those seeking wipers. Catch rates were low in 2014 with only 2 fish in four nets. Catch rates should improve with additional stockings but wipers will continue to be managed as a low density trophy fish into the future.

Channel Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



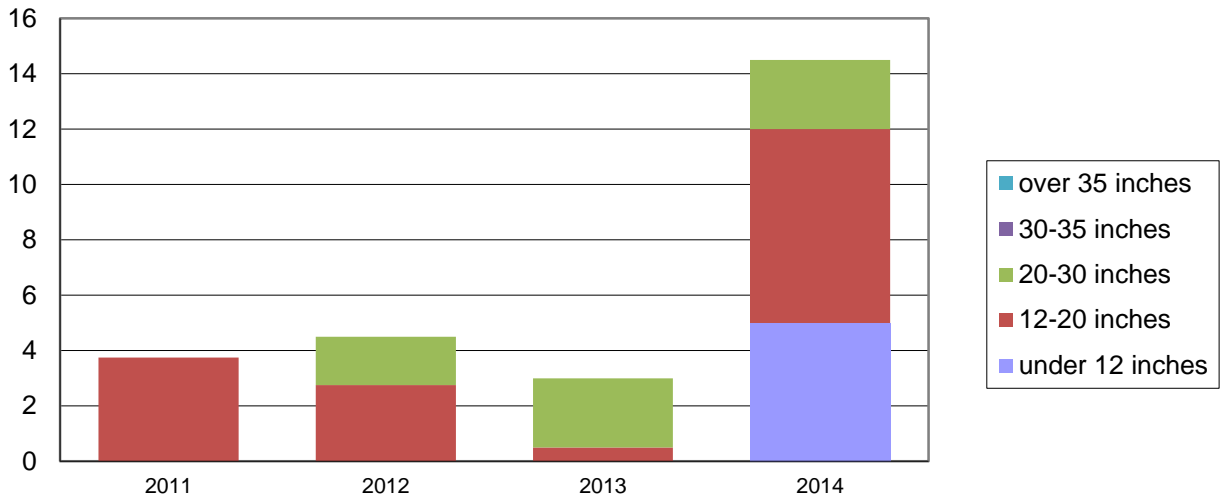
Channel catfish numbers have improved at Swanson due to an aggressive stocking policy. Biologists sampled 19 catfish per net in 2014. More than 75% of the fish sampled were greater than 16 inches long and there were even a few trophy fish in excess of 28 inches total length. Swanson continues to be a great fishing destination for catfish anglers. In addition to channel catfish, blue catfish are also being stocked in order to create a unique fishery for catfish anglers in Southwest Nebraska.

White Bass Catch Per Unit Effort



Biologists sampled 5 white bass per net in 2014. White bass numbers have been variable in the last few years but have been down when compared to survey results from 2007-2010. This decline is due to the loss of two large year classes that were making up the bulk of the white bass populations. It is not uncommon to see boom and bust cycles in white bass numbers. There is still a population of adult fish to serve as brood stock in the coming years and if environmental factors cooperate white bass populations should improve on their own.

Blue Catfish Catch Per Unit Effort



Blue Catfish were introduced to Swanson in 2008 in an effort to provide a unique trophy fishing opportunity for catfish anglers. Blue cats are stocked semiannually and seem to be growing more quickly than expected. In fact, there were a few fish sampled in the 22-24 inch class. There were 14 fish per net sampled in 2014 which is up from previous surveys. It is important to note that the bag limit for blue cats is 1 fish per day and 2 fish in possession. Due to natural variation in color, catfish species are more easily identified based on the anal fin rather than coloration.

Blue Catfish



Straight fin with more than 30 rays

Channel Catfish



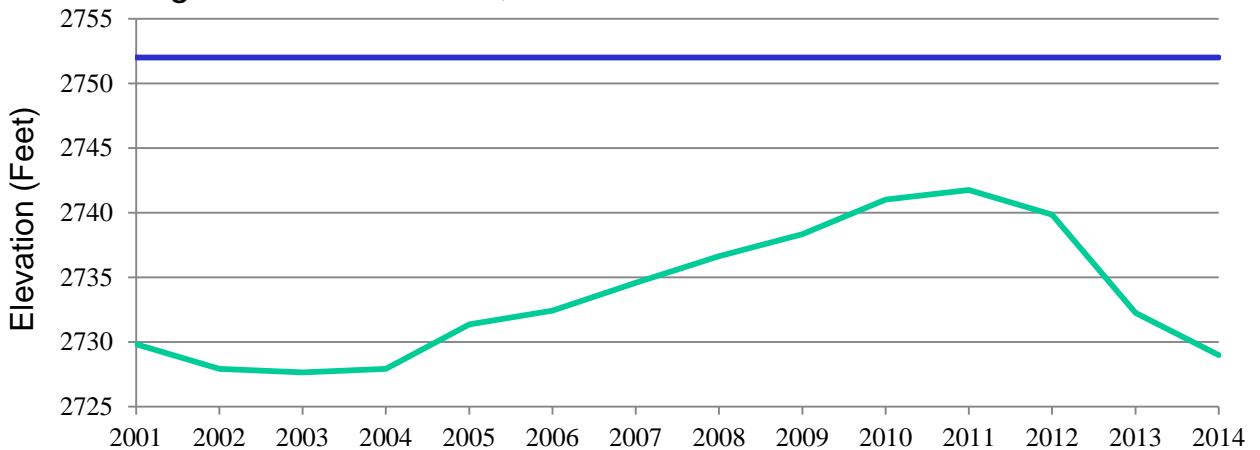
Curved fin with less than 30 rays

Swanson Reservoir Fish Stocking Summary

Year	Walleye	Wiper	Channel Catfish	Blue Catfish	Yellow Perch
2014	4,863,000 (fry)			4,158 (12.5")	81,195 (.5-1")
2013	2,800,000 (fry)	13,513 (1.2")			13,441 (2.25")
2012	7,570,000 (fry)		20,175 (10.5 ")		
2011	3,470,000 (fry)			9,985 (5.5")	12,420 (2.5")
2010	6,300,000 (fry)		15,756 (10")		

Above is a table of fish stockings for the last 5 years at Swanson Reservoir. The species stocked, number stocked, and fish size are presented in the table. Multiple species are stocked annually at Swanson and a comprehensive database of fish stockings can be found at the Nebraska Game and Parks website or by following the link below. [Stocking Database](#)

Average Annual Elevation, Swanson Reservoir 2001-2014



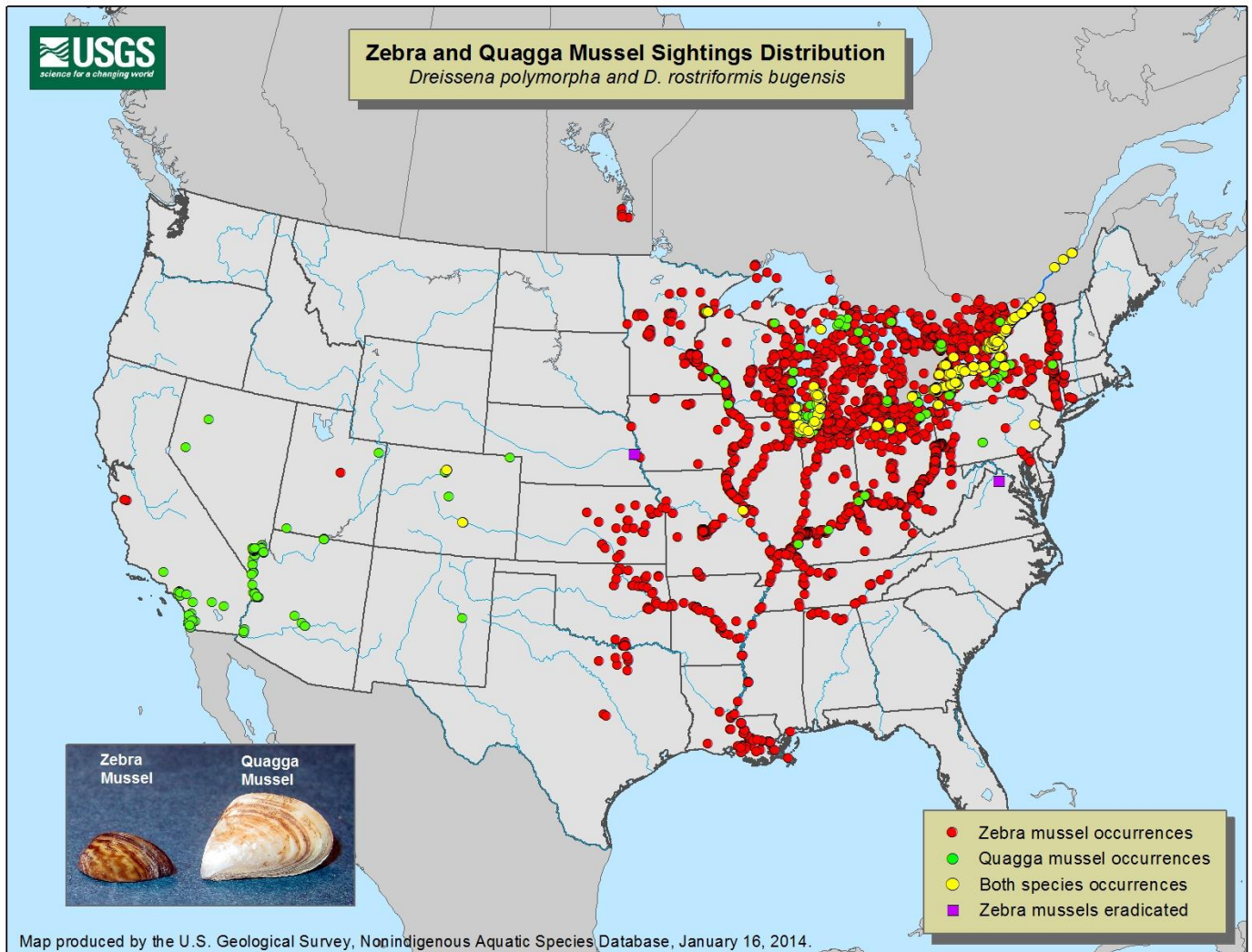
Water levels at Swanson recovered nicely beginning in 2009 but appear to be on the way back down. The elevation in December 2013 was 2729 feet and it appears that the reservoir will remain at these lower elevations at least until we cycle out of this drought pattern. The dark blue line indicates the top of the active conservation elevation and the green line indicates the mean reservoir elevation. More detailed information can be obtained from: [Current Elevation](#)



STOP AQUATIC HITCHHIKERS!™

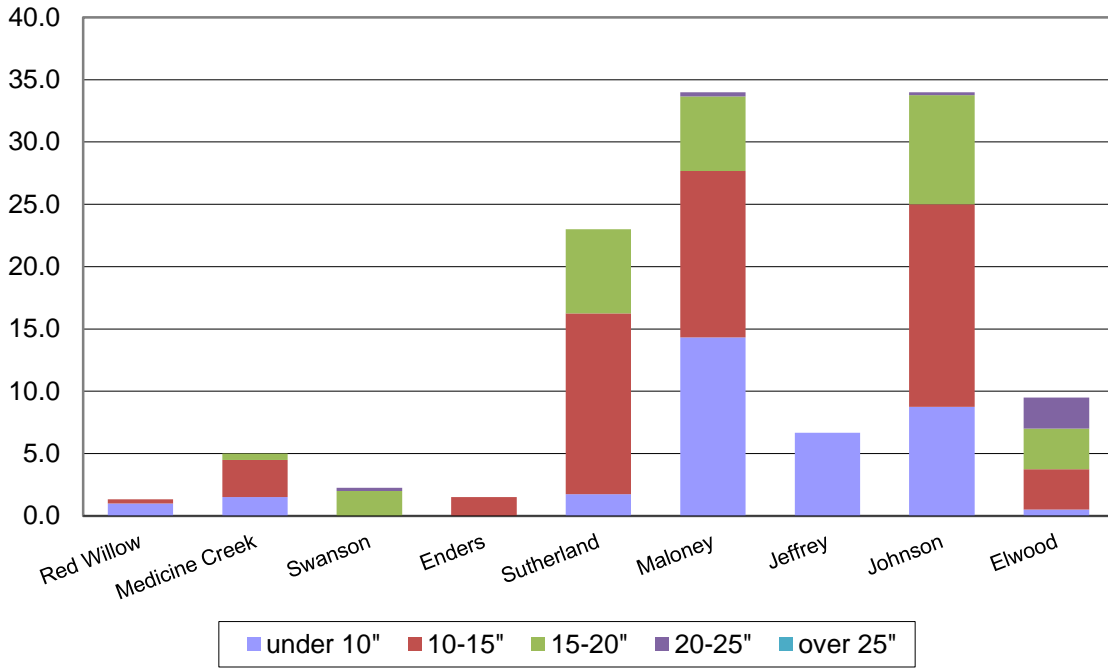
Prevent the transport of nuisance species.
Clean all recreational equipment.

www.ProtectYourWaters.net

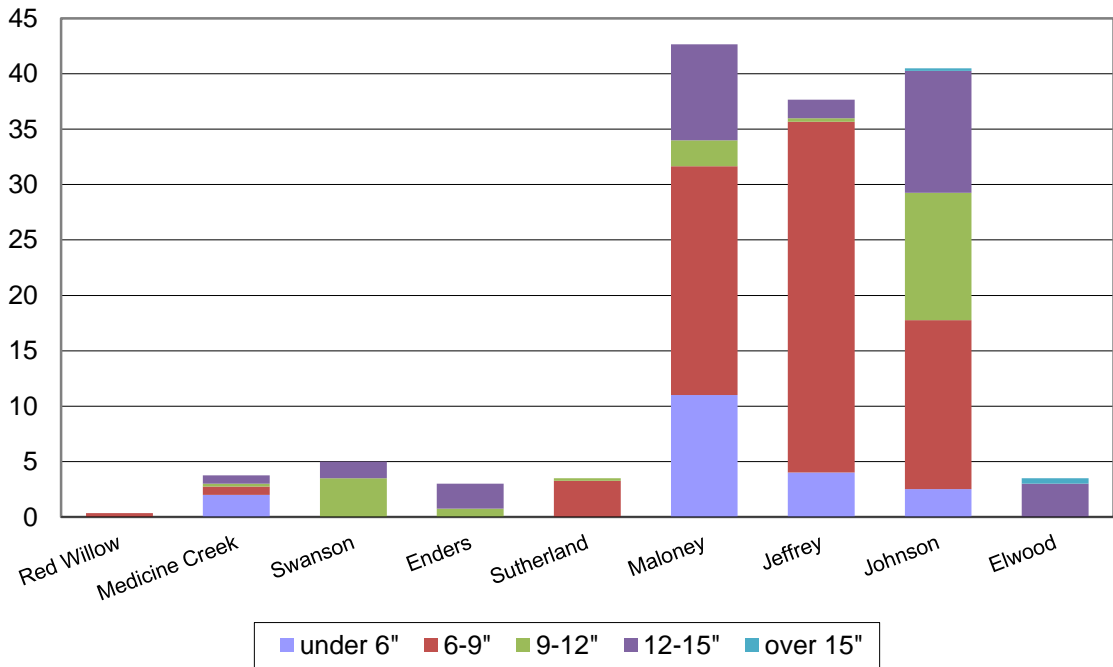


Aquatic invasive species (AIS) are getting closer to Nebraska waters all the time and have the potential for strong negative impacts on the State's aquatic resources. The spread of AIS can be prevented using the Clean, Drain, and Dry technique. Before leaving any water body make sure to drain or dump any standing water and remove debris that might be attached to the boat or trailer. If possible allow the watercraft to completely dry before launching at another area. Follow the link: [Nebraska Invasives Species Program](#) or call 402-472-3133 to report any possible AIS sightings or for more information about AIS in Nebraska

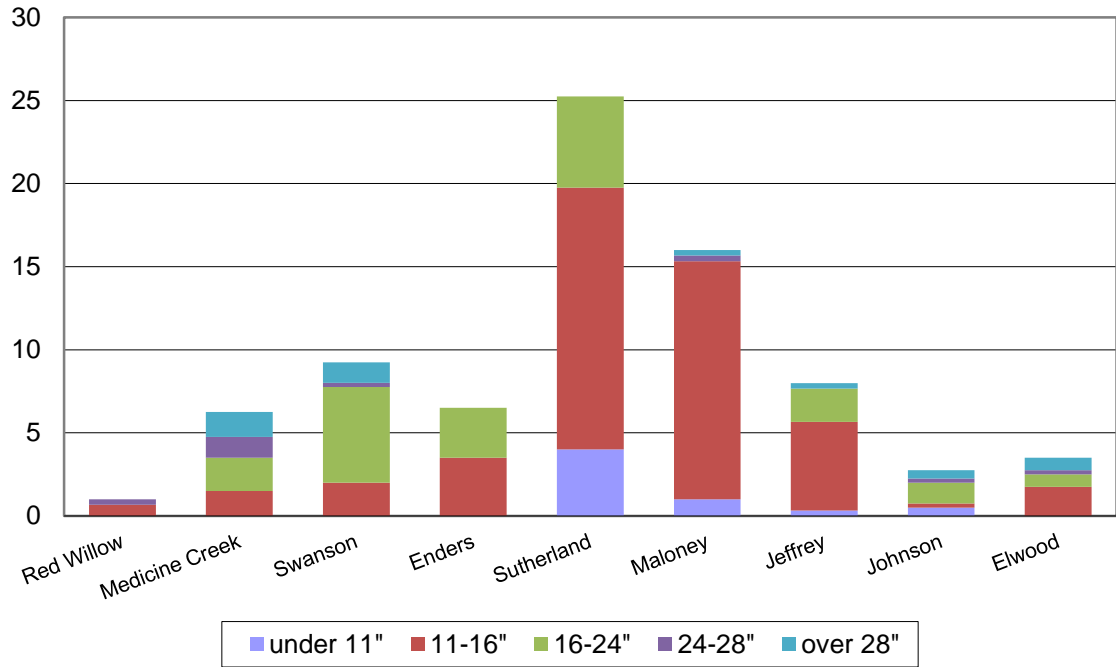
2014 Southwest District Walleye Catch



2014 Southwest District White Bass Catch



2014 Southwest District Channel Catfish Catch



2014 Southwest District Wiper Catch

